



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

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FB12-052

NOAA Seeks Comments – Proposed Rule Reef Fish Permit Income Requirement and Dual-permitted Crew Size

NOAA Fisheries Service is seeking comments on a proposed rule to implement Amendment 34 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico. NOAA Fisheries Service previously announced the availability of the amendment for public review and comment on July 10, 2012 (FB12-051).

The proposed rule, if implemented, would:

- Eliminate the earned income qualification requirement for the renewal of Gulf of Mexico commercial reef fish permits, and
- Increase the maximum number of crew members for dual-permitted (commercial and charter) vessels.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council determined the existing earned income requirement is not compatible with recent regulatory changes in the reef fish fishery, such as the implementation of individual fishing quota programs. Removing the income requirement will also provide fishermen the flexibility to earn income in other occupations.

The regulation pertaining to the maximum number of crew stipulates that dual-permitted vessels without a certificate of inspection are limited to a three-person crew when fishing commercially. The proposed increase to four crew members would most directly benefit commercial spear fishermen. This would allow two persons to remain aboard while two divers are in the water, thereby increasing the safety of commercial diving operations.

Request for Comments

Written comments on this rule must be received **no later than August 17, 2012**, to be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service. All comments received by NOAA Fisheries Service will be addressed in the final rule. Electronic copies of the proposed rule or the amendment may be obtained from the federal e-Rulemaking portal at www.regulations.gov, and the NOAA Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office Web site at sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/.

How to Submit Comments

You may submit comments by either of the following methods. Comments received through other means may not be considered.

Electronic Submissions: Federal e-Rulemaking Portal:
www.regulations.gov

- Enter the following docket number into the “Search” box: **NOAA-NMFS-2012-0025**.
- Select the appropriate title, and click “Submit a Comment.” This will display the comment Web form.
- Attachments to electronic comments (up to 10 MB) will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

Mail: Steve Branstetter, NOAA Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505.

All comments will be part of the public record, and generally posted for public viewing to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change. All personal identifying information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter, may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. Anonymous comments will be accepted.

This summary is not a substitute for the actual regulations. We encourage you to read the full text of the regulations, available at www.sero.noaa.gov.

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